

Is This Anxiety, COVID-19, Or Something Else?

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The news and your Twitter timeline are full of warnings and (mis)information about COVID-19, everyone is talking about it, and when you go to the grocery store there is no bread or pasta left on the shelves (tip: if you can, go early in the day!). We are all stuck at home because we are trying to “flatten the curve” and we want to make sure that we are not passing the virus onto someone else. We are also in an unusual situation because there are not enough COVID-19 tests and we can only get tested if actively showing symptoms (www.cdc.gov). For many, these circumstances are leading to a heightened awareness of physical discomfort as we check and double check for symptoms.

In this crisis moment, anxiety is expected.

Anxiety shows up in many forms, but can specifically be experienced as physical symptoms that mirror physical illnesses. This makes checking in with your body and yourself more challenging. It can be hard to accurately assess if the physical discomfort you are experiencing is due to a cold, allergies, anxiety, COVID-19, hunger, dehydration, exhaustion, or something else entirely.

Below is some information about anxiety and how to manage it. It is by no means completely comprehensive, nor is it a substitute for checking in with a medical professional if you have questions about your symptoms.

Common physical symptoms of anxiety	COVID-19 symptoms
Pounding heart Sweating Headaches Stomach upset Dizziness Frequent urination or diarrhea Shortness of breath Muscle tension or twitches Shaking or trembling Insomnia	Cough Fever Shortness of breath
What to do	What to do
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Connect with others – from a distance<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Call, text, reach out and talk about your concerns with a trusted friend• Manage stress<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Recognize what you can change and take care of it, and learn how to let go of the stress that you don’t have as much control over• Practice relaxation techniques<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ There are so many resources out there for Progressive Muscle Relaxation,	Call your doctor and seek testing Self-isolate and minimize the exposure to others. Follow guidelines at: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html

<p>Visualization, Body Scan, Deep Breathing techniques. Look them up and try them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We will have more of these virtually available from the Counseling Center soon. • Exercise regularly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Keep moving your body even when you are stuck at home. • Get enough sleep <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 7-9 hours per night. ○ Try to go to bed and get up at the same times each day • Be smart about caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ These substances increase the physical symptoms of anxiety • Put a stop to chronic worry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Journal, count cars going by, think about something pleasant – do something to make yourself stop thinking about your worry • Seek help and support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Talk to your counselor, adviser, spiritual support person, doctor, and other support people ○ Remember that even though you are not on campus in Mankato, all campus services remain available to you remotely! 	
<p>Reference https://www.helpguide.org/articles/anxiety/anxiety-disorders-and-anxiety-attacks.htm</p>	<p>Reference https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html</p>

Remember to take care of yourself and to take care of others by washing your hands and remembering that your mental health is important! If you need some additional support from the Counseling Center, call (507) 389-1455 (M-F 8:00 am – 4:30 pm) and ask to talk with a counselor about your concerns.